

A message was received from the Governor returning House bill No. 20, "An act to provide for the registration of voters," together with his objections to the same.

On motion of Mr. Gillette the reading of the journal was dispensed with.

The following veto message from the Governor was then submitted:

EXECUTIVE OFFICE, STATE OF TEXAS,
AUSTIN, April 3, 1873.

Hon. M. D. K. Taylor, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the State of Texas:

SIR: I have to return to your house, where it originated, the act entitled "An act to provide for the registration of voters."

Among what seem to me objectionable features of this act, I must ask the attention of the House especially to the following:

1. It declares in the first section all previous registration within this State to be null and void. I suppose it might only intend in this to repeal the previous laws on that subject, but the repeal is provided for in the sixteenth section, and the declaration may be open to the construction of having a much more extensive purpose. It is certainly not competent for one Legislature to declare that the legislation of a previous Legislature is null and void.

2. It attempts to repeal the act relating to special elections under the act of May 31, 1871, without supplying a substitute therefor. It would thus be objectionable even if it did not otherwise violate the constitutional provision, article twelve, section seventeen, which directs that every law enacted by the Legislature shall embrace but one object, and that shall be expressed in its title.

There is reason to believe that the special registration act of May 31, 1871, was misused, and perhaps it should be repealed, but this ought to be by a separate act for that special purpose, and when repealed, some substitute should be provided for it. Probably the best substitute would be to require a general registry of all voters previous to each general election, which might then serve as a basis for ascertaining the number of voters required to make up the two-thirds who are necessary to the affirma-

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tive of all questions of internal improvement submitted to the people of counties or towns. If the said act of May 31, 1871, be repealed, and no such general registry provided in its place, it would, in most counties, be impossible to get two-thirds of the registered voters, even though every actual voter of the county might vote. A general registry every two years of all the voters will, besides, have the good effect of purging the lists of the thousands of names which accumulate there of persons whose absence or death is never brought to the attention of the registering officers, and whose names may (and doubtless are) often, without much risk of discovery, be used by fraudulent voters.

3. The act returned seems, also, to be too complicated in its details. It could not be enforced in many parts of the State at all, and within nearly every county of the State the neglect or incompetency of any one of the numerous justices of the peace, who are made the registrars, might be expected to deprive many voters of the privilege of voting.

4. It requires each voter to state his age, nationality and color. The voter on registering, should be required to show that he is over twenty-one years of age, and to establish the place of his residence; but beyond this necessary information, further scrutiny into his private history, complexion or antecedents, should not be exacted of him and placed on record.

I have, therefore, to request that the same be reconsidered.

EDMUND J. DAVIS, Governor.

On motion of Mr. Brown of Dallas, the message and accompanying returned bill were referred to a special committee of five.

The Speaker appointed Messrs. Brown of Dallas, chairman, Green, Nelson, Powers and Winkler said committee.